

REVITALIZATION PHASE: TEAM DESIGN

Quick Guide to Hiring in Turbulent Times

In the best of times and the worst of times, it takes a team—your talent—to make a dental practice successful! Your efficiency, culture, customer service, and outcomes depend on a synergistic group of professionals who are banded together in support of your values to achieve your vision. Whether we hire during the best economies with high levels of employment, or times like these with unexpected layoffs and economic challenges, the following are the keys to finding and retaining high performing talent.

Finding the Right Candidates

Always hire for attitude and abilities, and train for skill. Having a clearly written job advertisement can help you find the best candidates.

The most effective job ads include:

- A Brief, high-level statement about your location and type of business
“We are a downtown, busy practice focused on the highest level of dental care and results.”
- What you are looking for (position title and key knowledge, skills, and abilities)
“We are looking for a (full-time or part-time) Treatment Coordinator who is warm, caring, and has excellent communication skills to help patients on their journey to long-term health.”
- The skills *required* for the job and the skills *preferred* for the job
“Experience in dentistry required. Experience with Dentrix and Microsoft Excel a plus, but will train the right person.”
- Quality statement that reveals something unique and inspiring about your practice
“If you are interested in joining a dedicated, professional team who makes a difference in the community and improves the lives of patients every day, please send your resume and cover letter to msmith@anywheredental.com.”

Keep ads general. Answer key questions like hours and compensation in person.

Where to Place Your Job Ad

Non-Dental-Specific Job Sites

- [Indeed](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Craigslist](#)
- [Betterteam](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)

Dental-Specific Job Sites

- Try your local dental association FIRST
- [ADA Career Center](#)
- [DentalPost](#)

The Interview Process

The interview process is a series of purposeful conversations that build relationships of trust and commitment. It can have multiple components.

Phone Screening

The purpose of the “telephone” screening is to eliminate applicants who are not right for the position before they are invited for an in-office interview. In today’s world, the use of virtual connections with a video component, such as a Zoom or Skype meeting, may be effective.

- During this screening process, determine general similarities between the applicant and the requirements for the position (i.e. patient service, experience levels, degree of understanding of duties, work hours, and salary).
- Assign an operational partner with excellent communication skills that exudes your team values to conduct the screening. (If you do not have that team member, this person is YOU.)
- The screening is brief (lasting no longer than 15 minutes) and results in A, B, and C categories of candidates. Only candidates with an A score, and possibly some with a B score, move on to get scheduled for in-person interviews.

Sample Phone Screening Questions

- “What about our ad prompted you to respond?”
- “Can you tell me about your most recent experience in your current practice (or position)?” This is better than “How much experience do you have in....?” This helps to determine the quality rather than quantity of the candidate’s experience.
- “Generally speaking, what is most important to you about your current (or most recent) position?”
- “The hours for the position are _____. Will that fit with what you are looking for?”
- “Before we continue our discussion, let us make sure we are in the same ballpark on the compensation package. What kind of range of wage are you looking for?” You do not have to reveal your range if you do not want to. If the applicant asks what the job pays, simply state that it will depend on the individual’s skills; then restate your question about salary.

The In-Person Interview

The purpose of live, in-person interviews with the doctor(s) and key team members is to co-discover the skills, abilities, and behaviors that complement your team dynamics and support the open job description duties and outcomes.

Sample Skill and Behavioral Questions

Questions about their current or most recent position

- What circumstances led to your employment at _____?
- What most influenced your decision to work there?
- What are (were) your day-to-day responsibilities?
- In what ways could your performance have been improved?
- What aspects of the position do (did) you enjoy the most/least?
- Tell me about any recent changes in your practice that arose in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how you have responded?

Questions about their previous work environments

- Tell me about your favorite position you have worked with in the past?
- Tell me about the least favorite position you have worked with in the past?
- Tell me about a position or environment when you were most productive and why?

- Tell me which of your previous positions has prepared you most for this role and why?

Questions about their personal effectiveness

- How would your current manager describe you?
- Where do you see yourself career-wise in three to five years?
- How does the position we are discussing today pertain to these career aspirations?
- If you could create the ideal job for yourself, what would that look like?
- Why are you attracted by this position we are discussing today?
- As you review the knowledge, skills and abilities and duties listed on this job description, what are your strengths and what are your opportunities for training and growth?
- What personal qualities do you think are necessary to do this job well?

Questions for Hygienists

- How have you supported your case acceptance for both additional hygiene and restorative services?
- What philosophies (i.e. Spear, Dawson, Pankey) have you had to support as a hygienist in offices you have worked in?
- What percentage of patients do you believe should be candidates for advanced periodontal therapy and customized intervals beyond 6 months?
- Share with me some of your successes when it comes to influencing patients in committing to their hygiene care as well as restorative treatment?

The Working Interview and Skills Assessment

For key clinical positions, it is wise to set up opportunities to see chairside performance, either with patients or mock opportunities utilizing team members. The goal is to see both their clinical expertise and how they support the doctor(s). For administrative team members from Office Managers, PRDs, TCs, etc., case studies and role plays can accomplish the same results.

The goals are to observe demonstrated abilities and confirm key skills that are essential to be a serious candidate.

In a competitive hiring cycle, spreading out multiple interviews over time can hurt your chances to quickly attract and hire the best candidates. Interviews can be combined in a short sequence to efficiently make the best choices in a condensed period of time.

Observing Your New Hire

Although “At Will” employment status does not allow for formal probation periods, paying close attention to your newly hired team member during the initial training phase is essential. React quickly to any “red flags” regarding less-than-expected knowledge, skills, or abilities. Your team will judge you by how you handle the weakest link.

Not all great people are good, but all good people can learn to be great. Excellent team members will always find good cultures to work in. Be one of them so you can create greatness!